Speeches and Oral Presentations
NC State Writing and Speaking Tutorial Services * NC State Graduate Writing Center
go.ncsu.edu/wsts * 919.515.316 * go.ncsu.edu/gwc

Speeches and presentations usually follow this general layout:

**Opening → Body → Conclusion**

### Opening

**Who is the audience and what is your purpose?**
- Tailor your speech to make sense to your audience and to achieve the goal of your speech.
  - Think about who your audience members are and what they expect from you and the presentation.
  - Try to anticipate whether the audience will ask a lot of questions or not.

### The Hook
- Start off strong with a catchy intro that draws the audience in and keeps them engaged. Tell a short and relevant story, reveal an interesting or startling fact, facilitate audience participation, ask a direct question, etc.
  - *Ex:* When I was eight, my older brother was arrested for gang involvement and I was introduced to the racism and classism inherent in the criminal justice system....
  - *Ex:* According to the NAACP, the U.S. holds 25% of the world’s total inmates.

### The Thesis
- Have a clear and direct thesis sentence that you use right away so that the audience knows what you are talking about and the end goal. Remember that the main purpose of a presentation is to **inform**, **persuade**, and **educate**.
  - *Ex:* American school children are falling behind in their ability to critically and effectively analyze different viewpoints as compared to other students worldwide.

### Body

**Create 2-3 Major Themes or Points**
- Include 2-3 main points that are supported by the appropriate amount of detail and examples.
- Craft each theme and point around the idea of informing, persuading, and educating the audience.

### Use Ethos, Logos, and Pathos
- **Ethos (Ethical Proof):** This aspect considers the credibility and/or the importance of the person giving the speech or the information behind it.
  - *Ex:* The Mayo Clinic supports my findings in the realm of neurology.
  - *Ex:* I have deep Colombian roots, as both of my parents were born there, and I grew up very well educated in Colombian culture and history.
- **Logos (Logical Proof):** This approach appeals to highly-credible scientific learning and logic in statements to persuade the audience.
  - *Ex:* In my study, 94.6% of respondents answered they showered during a thunderstorm.
  - *Ex:* A vast majority of the articles agreed that the effects of climate change are already manifesting worldwide.
- **Pathos (Emotional Proof):** This style plays on the audience’s feelings and values by incorporating things the audience would find important.
  - *Ex:* Everyday, millions of children worldwide go hungry while we have plenty.
  - *Ex:* The senseless killing of another human being is a violation of universal norms.
Conclusion

Summarize

- Restate and review the main points and ideas of the presentation. Rephrase and synthesize material to avoid repeating yourself.

Call to action and future implications

- What should people be doing or keeping in mind as a result of the information that you have given them? Why is your information important?

General Tips

- Repeat buzzwords or important phrases throughout.
- Slow down! It is easy to get nervous and talk quickly to get through your speech.
- Do not read off your notes, flashcards, or other visual aids, such as PowerPoints.
- Use appropriate eye contact.
- Be aware of nervous tics (e.g. fidgeting, swaying, etc).
- Avoid using filler words (e.g. um, like, uhhhh, etc.). Practice will help with this.
- Always define and never overuse complicated jargon or phrases not familiar to your audience. If necessary, remind your audience of the definition during others parts of the speech.
  - Ex: As a mentioned before, the first UN military operation in Somalia, UNOSOM I...
- Practice technology set up beforehand to avoid technical problems.
- Do not overuse statistics. It is hard for people to absorb and comprehend too many statistics.

Organizing Visual Aids

- Visual aids (e.g. PowerPoints) should support not dominate your presentation/speech.
- Do not use your visual aids as a crutch. Use it as further evidence and support.
  - Limit text to a couple words or phrases per slide.
  - Include detailed pictures, charts, and graphs that support your argument.
- Use common fonts and neutral colors for text and backgrounds to ensure visibility.
  - Be aware of light colors on a white background. They often cannot be seen.
  - Animation, wild fonts, and too many images can be distracting. Use sparingly.
- PRO TIP: Do not use colors that color-blind individuals have difficulty distinguishing (ex: red background and green text). The text will blend with the background and may be indecipherable.

How to Overcome Stage Fright

- Be prepared. Bring anything you might need with you, including a backup of your presentation.
- Practice a lot. Take any opportunity to practice your presentation, whether it be with a writing consultant or your roommate/suitemates. Practicing beforehand will make the final presentation familiar.
- Know that the audience supports you. Everyone generally wants you to do well. Likewise, others also become nervous when they present so do not feel pressured or judged. Practice will aid this as well.
- Remember it will be over sooner than you think. All the preparation leading up to the presentation will seem like nothing compared to the time that it actually takes you to present!

Works Consulted:
UNC-Chapel Hill Writing Center (http://writingcenter.unc.edu): The University of California’s Professional Development Center (https://career.ucsf.edu); Oral Presentations in the Composition Course: A Brief Guide (Duncan & Friedrich).